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Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

Discussion papers on the theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, submitted by major groups and other stakeholders

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present document is a compilation of the executive summaries of the position papers on the theme of the high-level political forum, "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", submitted by the various major groups and other relevant stakeholders that have autonomously established and maintained effective coordination mechanisms for participation in the high-level political forum on sustainable development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 67/290. The full reports are posted on the website of the forum: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf/2018.

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I. Women

1. The complexity of women's lives and realities is reflected in the intersectional nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. Of the 17 Goals, 8 explicitly integrate commitments to women and girls, and the achievement of targets across the agenda has implications for the human rights of women and girls. The six Goals under review at the 2018 high-level political forum, on water and sanitation; energy; safe and sustainable cities; protecting biodiversity; addressing unsustainable consumption and production; and ensuring the means of implementation to achieve the Goals, are as important for gender equality as they are critical for sustainable development.

2. The paper submitted by the women's major group offers a detailed gender analysis of the six Goals, demonstrates how women and girls are affected differently by development failures and provides specific recommendations for action.

3. As Governments take forward the implementation of the six Goals, the women's major group provides the cross-cutting recommendations set out below.

4. Member States should actively support the meaningful participation of women in decision-making. From increasing access to safe drinking water, to ensuring that women and girls have the information and means necessary to be able to practise menstrual health, to protecting forests, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, to addressing safety and security within cities, women offer particular expertise and must be at the table when decisions are made. Governments should create formal opportunities for the most marginalized groups of women and the women most affected by policies and programmes under consideration to have a say in their development.

5. Member States should invest in the collection of gender data. The lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, location, ethnicity, migration status and other factors sets back development efforts because adequate information about who is being left behind is crucial. Investing in efforts to close the massive gender data gap is essential for effective budgeting and policymaking.

6. Member States should address gender-discriminatory norms and stereotypes and gender-based violence. The stigma surrounding menstrual hygiene, stereotypes about women's roles that prevent their participation in the sustainable energy sector and harassment in the streets all limit women's ability to participate in public life and to achieve equality. Strategies to address gender-discriminatory norms and violence must be integrated into policies and programmes established to address each of the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Member States should value women's time and prioritize the reduction and redistribution of their unpaid work. Whether because of the time spent collecting drinking water, fuelwood or nutritious food or the time spent on public transportation to care for others, women and girls bear the burden of development failures in hours of unpaid work, which in turn limits their prospects for education and employment. Investing in gender-responsive infrastructure, social protection programmes and care services to reduce and redistribute women's and girls' disproportionate burden of unpaid work must be a priority.

8. Member States should use gender budgeting to ensure investments in women and girls. The failure to account for gender in budget allocations hinders the effectiveness of sustainable development programmes. Governments must analyse the gender-differentiated impacts of budgets and allocate money towards achieving clearly defined gender equality targets.

9. Member States should protect women's rights to own and control land, energy and other productive resources. The elimination of discriminatory laws and the

establishment of proactive policies to guarantee women's rights to own and control land and other productive resources are essential across each of the Sustainable Development Goals under consideration.

10. Member States should commit to accountability at all levels, from the local to the global. None of the Sustainable Development Goals will be achieved unless the closure of spaces for civil society at all levels is addressed, women human rights defenders, including environmental defenders, are protected, the presence of women's and feminist groups is ensured at forums for the discussion of accountability and rigorous and transparent reviews are carried out at all levels, including at the high-level political forum.

II. Children and youth

11. The trajectory towards sustainable development remains far from ideal. The transgression of the so-called planetary boundaries and the accumulation of historical inequalities are undermining sustainability and resilience. The current wave of anti-collectivism and globalism is further catalysing such adverse effects. The loss of the resolve to confront historical injustice, as embodied in Agenda 21, hinders the decolonization struggle at the high-level political forum.

12. The displacement of States, neoliberalism, the obsession with growth, the militarization of economies and the rise in the power of transnational corporations have further exhausted the planet's regenerative biocapacity, given dimension to the colonial divide and created unparalleled inequality of wealth between the ultra-rich and everyone else across countries in different stages of development. These trends are undermining the future of young people.

13. The United Nations, in its growing need for funding, is leaning towards the private sector without any accountability mechanisms. A critical turning point has been reached, and the pre-analytical view of society must be re-examined in an ecocidal neocolonial context.

14. In order to align the global architecture with a view to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the children and youth major group emphasizes the points set out below.

15. Water and sanitation is a human right. The rampant privatization of the global common is a primary structural barrier, resulting in sharp price hikes, obscuring responsibility for the provision of water and sanitation and, in some cases, violating the sovereignty of indigenous peoples.

16. The decarbonization of the economy faces barriers, including the artificially high cost of renewable energy systems, false assumptions about nuclear power, stalled divestment from fossil fuels, perverse subsidies and a lack of access to energy-storage technologies.

17. Integrated territorial development is indispensable for the localization of the global agenda. It addresses inequalities between different types of human settlements that result from incumbent power structures and planning paradigms, as well as underlying factors of urban-rural migration and social inequality. Systematic human rights violations of the urban poor embedded in exclusionary urban development policies remain a barrier. The principle of "build back better" should be mainstreamed and risk-informed policy enhanced.

18. An agreement on a universal protocol on plastics is needed, building on the work of the United Nations Environment Assembly. Forests should be given the status of protected global commons.

19. The economy is a subset of society and the environment. Policy approaches should align macroeconomic frameworks with the three dimensions of sustainable development. Concrete initiatives, such as the United Nations Environment Programme's Environmental Risk in Sovereign Credit Analysis project and environmental tax reform programme should be applied universally. The concept of "stranded assets" and the transition from fractional- to full-reserve banking are required to operationalize this paradigm.

20. Achieving universal access to basic services requires that they be delinked from migratory status. The benefits realized by the private sector from undocumented migrants and abusive practices should be highlighted.

21. Gender oppression and inequality remain significant. The inclusion of the voices of girls and young women in all decision-making spaces is essential to overcoming structural barriers that limit their agency.

22. Evidence from various disciplines and sources (formal, informal, traditional, indigenous, etc.) must form the foundation of each stage of the policy cycle. The appropriate application of technology is essential, and anticipatory governance frameworks that ensure technology justice are needed.

23. The high-level political forum should convene discussions on such emerging issues as megacities and shrinking cities, the rights of nature, public ownership of the global commons, ecocide as a crime against humanity, "degrowth" and global regulation of business in line with the discussions of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises at the Human Rights Council.

24. The success of the 2030 Agenda requires greater integration and coherence of the various global frameworks and inputs from the subsidiary bodies and forums of the Economic and Social Council, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, the New Urban Agenda, the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030, the Paris Agreement, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum and others.

25. To ensure rights-based participation modalities that provide protected spaces for critical segments of society, the reform process carried out by the high-level political forum should engage major groups and other stakeholders, building on the modalities described in General Assembly resolution 67/290.

III. Non-governmental organizations

26. For the 2030 Agenda to be truly transformative, urgent action is required to restructure global systems and reorient them towards equity and justice. This includes the meaningful and active participation of stakeholders at all stages of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, the non-governmental organizations (NGO) major group calls for a new development paradigm that prioritizes the flourishing of humans, nature and animals. Its proposals specific to the Sustainable Development Goals under consideration at the 2018 high-level political forum are set out below.

27. Recognizing the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in ensuring human rights, gender equality and peace, the NGO major group calls for a rights-based approach to Goal 6 that prevents the commodification and privatization of water sources and that ensures the transparent, accountable and fair distribution of services;

increases domestic resources and aid for water, sanitation and hygiene services to ensure equitable and affordable access; protects environmental ecosystems that ensure the security of water systems; and strengthens community-based water resource management.

28. To achieve Goal 7 and ensure sustainable energy for all, the NGO major group calls for inclusive, multi-stakeholder collaboration in designing and delivering sustainable energy solutions that protect the environment, cultural heritage and human rights. This includes the scaling-up of investments in renewable energy using innovative approaches to reach energy-poor communities through end-user-oriented energy services that are truly affordable, reliable, safe and sustainable.

29. Recognizing the right of humanity to safe, decent, culturally adequate and resilient living environments, the group calls for the implementation of Goal 11 through inclusive approaches that bring together local, national and international actors, including women and marginalized groups, in urban planning, the expansion of technologies and disaster risk management. Age-, gender- and disability-sensitive and participatory budgeting and planning are key in urban planning and integrated territorial governance.

30. The NGO major group calls for increased political will and action to achieve Goal 12, particularly through the regulation of corporate activity and waste, consumer education and environmental stewardship. Governments have a fundamental role in regulating the private sector and ensuring all-of-society action towards changing consumption and production patterns, moving from an excessive focus on profit and growth to a planet- and people-centred economy.

31. In the context of the ongoing degradation of the ecosystem of the planet, the NGO major group calls for the involvement of civil society, indigenous peoples, women and local communities in coordinated action to achieve Goal 15, in line with biodiversity-related intergovernmental frameworks and targets. States must implement policies and effective enforcement systems to hold extractive and polluting industries accountable, prevent further deterioration, conserve and protect biodiversity and work towards undoing previous damage.

32. The means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, encapsulated in Goal 17, must ensure the availability of the policy space required for Governments to enact regulations, enforcement measures and fiscal measures to advance their democratically owned and rights-based development agendas. The NGO major group demands the overdue introduction of a tax on financial transactions and the establishment of an intergovernmental body for international tax cooperation at the United Nations level. Trade must be organized along principles that support policy space and the rights-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the global North must provide at least 0.7 per cent of its gross domestic product in official development assistance, particularly for least developed countries.

33. Noting the "interlinked and indivisible" nature of the 2030 Agenda, the NGO major group calls for a holistic, coherent, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Partnerships among Governments, intergovernmental institutions, research and academic institutions and civil society organizations are critical to gaining the comprehensive perspectives, expertise and resources necessary to fully implement the Agenda, as well as to ensure monitoring, review and accountability. Cross-cutting issues must be addressed through a collaborative approach to enable collective success in furthering the well-being of humans, nature and animals and ensuring a transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all.

IV. Local authorities

34. The global development agendas, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework, along with United Nations Environment Assembly resolutions, offer an unprecedented opportunity for local and regional governments to contribute to global sustainability. The local and regional governments constituency reaffirms its commitment to those agendas and its political will to turn the global goals into localized objectives, through key alliances with the United Nations system and civil society. As the level of government ultimately responsible for taking concrete action, local and regional governments have a unique role to play.

35. The localization of the Sustainable Development Goals relates to the ways in which local and regional governments can support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through bottom-up action and the extent to which the Sustainable Development Goals provide a framework for local and urban development policy.

36. The Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments is the primary mechanism for facilitating the engagement of those governments in international processes. The Task Force convened the World Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities, which was a fundamental step in the development of the New Urban Agenda, which is closely linked to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The localization of the global agendas is a powerful driver in ensuring that territories and cities are sustainable, inclusive and able to unite efforts and improve the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals both nationally and globally.

37. Members of the Task Force, such as United Cities and Local Governments and the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, are developing reports to be launched at the high-level political forum in 2018 on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from the perspective of local and regional governments.

Assessing the status of the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals

38. In the area of awareness-raising, the efforts of international and national networks have succeeded in promoting the engagement of local and regional governments towards the 2030 Agenda. Nevertheless, additional tasks remain in mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals across the work of local and regional governments.

39. With respect to the alignment of ongoing plans, local and regional governments were already working on many of the topics covered by the Sustainable Development Goals, thus, understanding how to integrate ongoing actions is crucial.

40. Regarding the strengthening of a territorial approach, capacities need to be improved to address the interconnected effects of the Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated manner over urban and rural areas, strengthening linkages among territories.

41. Concerning the New Urban Agenda as a key enabler of the 2030 Agenda, a focus on the urban and territorial dimension, including such key areas as integrated planning, housing, mobility, pollution and climate change, resilience and culture, can accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

42. With regard to the multilevel governance and monitoring framework, national Governments must conduct open processes to define priorities with local and regional governments. Inclusive dialogue mechanisms can ensure coordination and the use of proper monitoring frameworks, including the comprehensive collection and analysis

of data. This should feed the voluntary national reviews, ensuring that local and regional governments are involved in their preparation.

43. In the areas of financing and means of implementation, adding new modalities requires unlocking funding opportunities for local and regional governments. In order to carry out this ambitious agenda, it is urgent that an enabling environment be created through the establishment of regulatory frameworks and policies to promote the empowerment of local and regional governments, develop programmes and organize capacity-building for local and regional governments.

44. To facilitate the decentralized peer-to-peer exchange of experiences among territories, particularly in less developed countries, international cooperation is crucial in supporting the localization of aid and investments at the local level.

Local and regional government forum

45. The high-level political forum provides a ground-breaking opportunity for the involvement of local and regional governments. The localization of all goals and targets, through the linkage of Goal 11 to the urban and territorial dimensions of the other Goals, is fundamental to ensuring the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

46. The Global Tracking Framework, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and UN-Habitat are organizing the first-ever local and regional government forum within the high-level political forum — a long-standing request of the local and regional government constituency. That opportunity will bring high-level representatives of local and regional governments together to report on the progress of the Sustainable Development Goals in their cities and regions and share messages to improve implementation locally and subnationally.

47. The forum should be recognized as a regular mechanism for involving the local and regional governments major group in the monitoring and reporting processes both globally and regionally. The efforts of local and regional governments to organize, collaborate and deliver informed inputs must be acknowledged as part of the institutional monitoring and reporting processes of the forum.

V. Workers and trade unions

Vision of trade unions with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals

48. The 2030 Agenda is premised on the recognition of the mutual dependence of environmental, economic and social sustainability. Together with the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, it provides the framework for achieving sustainable and resilient societies. The perspective of workers and trade unions is aligned with this holistic vision. A rights-based approach is a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. Labour standards must be guaranteed for all. Upholding the freedom of association and collective bargaining rights and supporting social dialogue between workers, organizations representing employers, and Governments as an instrument of governance not only deliver progress for working people and societies at large but also form one of the pillars of a functional democracy.

Just transition to environmentally, socially and economically sustainable energy and production patterns (Goals 7 and 12)

49. The "just transition" is premised on an inclusive approach that brings together workers, communities, employers and Governments in social dialogue to drive the concrete plans, policies and investments needed for a fast and fair transformation to a low-carbon economy. It adopts a rights-based approach to building social protection systems, providing skills training, redeployment, labour market policies and community development. Governments must strengthen their capacity to deliver just transition measures.

Responsible and sustainable investments: quality public services and resource mobilization (Goals 6 and 11)

50. Trade unions highlight the risks associated with the privatization of common goods and public services. In particular, the challenges that public-private partnerships raise with regard to transparency and the limits they impose on access to the goods and services needed to ensure that people are not left behind raise major questions about the capacity of such partnerships to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

51. Taxes are the most important source of public financing. It is important to note that central Governments have a key role to play in ensuring that local governments have public revenues sufficient to provide high-quality water and sanitation services. As such, sustainable publicly financed water and sanitation systems rely heavily on strong commitments from central Governments.

Responsible and sustainable investments: private finance for public sustainability (Goals 12 and 15)

52. Governments must ensure business accountability, transparency in investments and due diligence throughout global supply chains, as well as addressing problems associated with the operations of offshore finance and tax havens. Corporations must respect human rights, contribute to the formalization of the informal economy, uphold the core labour standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and practise the due diligence prescribed by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy.

53. To do so, Governments should:

(a) Ensure the implementation of labour rights, including freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively, decent wages and social protection;

(b) Commit to supporting social dialogue as a means of implementing the 2030 Agenda and implement, together with social partners, national just transition plans;

(c) Empower local governments to implement just transition measures that can adequately adapt labour market policies to local needs;

(d) Guarantee affordable and quality public services for public transport, energy and water-saving arrangements, health care and sanitation, and quality education;

(e) Implement progressive tax systems capable of supporting the financing of public services;

(f) Ensure business accountability and transparency in investments and due diligence in global supply chains, as prescribed by the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Tripartite Declaration;

(g) Address problems associated with offshore finance and tax havens;

(h) Include labour and environmental clauses in all public procurement actions and ensure transparency and disclosure in public contracts.

VI. Business and industry

54. The business and industry major group reiterates its commitment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and acknowledges the critical role it must continue to play in accelerating progress towards sustainable development. As a key partner to Governments and other stakeholders in driving inclusive economic growth, the private sector continues to make investments towards the achievement of the Goals, including in the areas of human and institutional capacity-building, project development and accessible and sustainable innovation and deployment.

55. The unprecedented participation of the private sector, as well as Governments and civil society organizations, at the 2017 business forum on the Sustainable Development Goals sent a clear message to the world about the level of engagement of the private sector in accelerating the implementation of the Goals and the commitment of the business and industry major group to playing a key role in driving sustainability, eradicating poverty and creating decent and productive work for all.

56. The private sector is committed to mobilizing its resources and expertise to ensure that policy frameworks and partnerships support the vision of an inclusive, sustainable and prosperous world, as embodied in the 2030 Agenda. To that end, it is hoped that the high-level political forum will provide a platform for constructive and inclusive dialogue between business and government entities on the Sustainable Development Goals.

57. The private sector reiterates its intention to participate in the high-level political forum as an active partner in promoting sustainability by sharing knowledge and providing expertise on the formation and implementation of policy and to engage in partnerships with a lasting impact.

58. The business and industry major group is committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the private sector and stands ready to work with the private sector, Government and all stakeholders to deliver on that commitment.

VII. Scientific and technological community

59. Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals as an integrated set, taking full account of the interdependencies among them, creates opportunities to reframe development, promote policy coherence, create efficiencies, target investments and promote stronger buy-in. Achieving the Goals together as an indivisible whole is not only possible, but is the only way of achieving the Goals.

60. There is a special urgency for acting now on interactions among the Sustainable Development Goals, as recent decisions are locking in unsustainable pathways. Wider coordinated efforts are needed to understand the long-term routes to achieving the Goals and their potential to cut across policy domains, as well as temporal and geographical boundaries.

61. The achievement of sustainable development requires better integration, more coordination and cooperation at an unprecedented scale, including among scientists, policymakers, members of civil society and the private sector.

62. The scientific and technological community has a crucial role to play in providing the evidence, expertise and data to inform, measure and monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

63. Alongside technology, governance, societal norms and values and behavioural changes have a huge role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Governance systems need to be changed to better manage complex multidimensional challenges.

64. The high-level political forum offers an opportunity to reflect not only on successes but, importantly, also on challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This allows for a better learning process and more effective engagement of scientists and stakeholders.

65. Access to safe water for all requires the balancing of demands from many socioeconomic actors, protecting the sources of water and rainfall and enhancing the transparent governance of natural resource management. Water and sanitation systems require integrated and multi-scale management that takes into account changing environmental and social pressures. Access to sanitation is a social and political issue as well as a technical one, with small-scale community dynamics affecting it.

66. While access to modern energy is fundamental to human development, not everyone has enjoyed its benefits. The extraction, conversion and consumption of energy have major impacts on other sectors. Urban policymakers need to tackle simultaneously energy security, sustainability and affordability. There is a need for a long-term approach to science and technology development to scale up low-carbon technologies, especially in developing countries, and address any potential negative impacts on energy prices.

67. By 2030, 60 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. While cities have administrative boundaries, their sustainability is dependent on a much wider area, which supply cities with food, water, energy and consumer goods. The design, density, efficiency and size of cities govern their consumption of natural resources, their ability to provide secure and healthy lives for their inhabitants and their impact on the natural environment surrounding them. A systems approach to urban planning is key to achieving sustainable development.

VIII. Education and academia stakeholder group

68. Free, high-quality education is crucial for breaking cycles of poverty and transforming societies, placing Goal 4 at the heart of the Agenda. The Goals to be reviewed by the high-level political forum in 2018 rely on education for their realization and are at the same time crucial for the realization of Goal 4. Cross-sectoral relationships and interrelated policymaking are necessary, in line with Goal 17. Civil society organizations that work to promote the right to education have recognized this; networks have broadened, and cross-sectoral dialogues are achieving positive change.

69. Progress has been witnessed in some countries in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4, and in efforts to align targets with national policies and legislation. Efforts to develop follow-up and monitoring mechanisms have taken shape at the national and global levels, as exemplified by the

work described in the *Global Education Monitoring Report* and by the establishment of such accountability mechanisms as the Education 2030 Steering Committee.

70. The financing of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals has proven challenging. Domestic budgets remain insufficient to deliver on Goal 4, and in some cases they have even decreased; reductions in official development assistance have not helped. At the same time, proposals to close the financing gap through loans have been put forward, pointing to a worrying and unfitting return of the debt model. A combination of increased domestic resources, particularly through tax justice mechanisms at the national and international levels, and increased international cooperation are necessary to fully implement the 2030 Agenda. The allocation by Governments of insufficient resources for Goal 4 has given rise to increasing privatization in some countries, with reports of for-profit actors taking advantage of gaps in the provision of public education, undermining the responsibility of the State as the duty bearer for the Agenda.

71. Despite the participatory climate in which the Sustainable Development Goals were developed, the doors have often since closed to civil society, and we have seen cases of the rising criminalization of social protest. Citizens must have their perspectives considered in decision-making and monitoring processes.

72. A further challenge lies in measurement and accountability processes. Civil society can contribute by actively engaging in the debates on indicators and data production, on data transparency and publication and, in some cases, on data collection, including by mobilizing academia. Furthermore, a predominance of attention is being paid to several global education indicators that reduce the assessment of progress towards the Agenda to an examination of test scores, which will not contribute to the successful realization of the ambition to deliver a quality education and, with respect to the full set of Sustainable Development Goals, to ensure a fulfilling life for all.

73. Bottlenecks related to policymaking in the area of education have been identified, including insufficient attention to gender equality; the persistence of violence, conflict and emergency situations; a narrowing of the Goal 4 agenda, associated with a neglect of youth and adult education; and insufficient attention to the conditions and status of teachers.

74. The recommendations of the education and academia stakeholder group include the following:

(a) Credible road maps must be developed for each Sustainable Development Goal; for Goal 4, they must explicitly provide for education that is of high quality, equitable, inclusive and free;

(b) States must deliver on their responsibility to finance the Sustainable Development Goals; for Goal 4, this should be aligned with the Education 2030 Framework for Action;

(c) Educational systems must be supported in responding to the challenges of the future, and human rights, sustainable development and global citizenship should be mainstreamed across curricula, teaching and learning methods and materials, assessment methods, and teacher training and support measures;

(d) Citizen participation in accountability at all levels must be enabled;

(e) Voluntary national reviews should include formal space for reporting by representatives of national civil society organizations.

IX. Persons with disabilities

75. To truly make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, all people must be included, diversity must be celebrated and all must have support for living and being included in cities and human settlements. Resilience is essential for the realization of sustainable development, and to achieve this, those who are the furthest behind, such as persons with disabilities, must be meaningfully included. The 2030 Agenda embodies a commitment to include those furthest behind and to reduce their risks to economic, social and environmental shocks. The Sustainable Development Goals can be realized for persons with disabilities only if implementation is guided by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

76. Globally, persons with disabilities make up 15 per cent of the world's population, 80 per cent of whom live in poverty. Nearly 36 per cent of the global population lacks access to sanitation, and 884 million people, mainly in the poorest communities, lack access to clean drinking water. Thus, approximately 177 million persons with disabilities are adversely affected and lack access to clean water and sanitation. Furthermore, more than half of all persons with disabilities live in towns and cities that are rarely accessible, and this number is estimated to grow to between 750 million and 1 billion by 2030.[1] Linked to this statistic, the global population of people forcibly displaced reached a record 66 million in 2016, with as many as 10 million of them being persons with disabilities.

77. Owing to barriers to taking advantage of the built environment, information and means of communication, persons with disabilities are denied access to basic urban services, including housing, roads, public spaces, transportation, sanitation and water, health care, education, and emergency and disaster response. Yet, it is generally feasible to meet accessibility requirements with 1 per cent of the total cost of a project. The reality is that retrofitting for accessibility is more expensive, costing up to 20 per cent of the original cost compared to integrating accessibility and universal design principles into new buildings. Furthermore, little support and few services exist to enable persons with disabilities and their families to realize their right to live and be included in the community. Even where services exist, they tend to be based on congregate care and too often continue to be segregated and medicalized. Inclusive societies recognize the interdependence of the rights of its members and that to be fully and meaningfully included, one must have access to inclusive education, affordable housing, the right to make decisions and employment.

78. Inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient societies cannot be defined by bricks and mortar alone, and the degree of inclusiveness is measured not only by the ease of physical access. Inclusive societies must be built on the principles set out in article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, namely, respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons; non-discrimination; full and effective participation and inclusion in society; respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity; equality of opportunity; accessibility; equality between men and women; and respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities.

[1] Of an estimated 5 billion urban dwellers, 15 to 20 per cent would be ESTIMATED TO BE persons with disabilities. Data sources used: World Health Organization and World Bank, *World Report on Disability* (2011), and the United Nations Population Fund website on urbanization: www.unfpa.org/urbanization.

79. To realize inclusiveness for persons with disabilities, policymakers must be informed by evidence-based data that are disaggregated by disability through the use of a short set of questions developed by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics and by proper consultations with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations on the design, implementation and monitoring of plans in connection with the Sustainable Development Goals.

X. Volunteer groups

80. Volunteers and their efforts are essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The aim of eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity will not be realized without the contributions of millions of properly supported and enabled volunteers.

81. Volunteers extend the reach of Sustainable Development Goal-related services, facilitating access to health, education and other services to some of the poorest, most marginalized and most vulnerable communities, ensuring that no one is left behind.

82. For poor and marginalized people, including indigenous peoples, refugees, people with disabilities and others who are all too often at the margins of society, the opportunity to volunteer is a chance to move from being a passive recipient to an active participant in development processes.

83. Volunteerism is a universal phenomenon, but it does not occur at uniform rates, nor is it uniformly effective. It is strongest when it is recognized and supported.

84. Citizen-led monitoring offers opportunities to collect data at a level that is closer to poor and marginalized people and, when combined with participatory processes, it also has the potential to empower people to realize their rights as citizens.

Goal 6

85. Volunteers are active in ensuring that water sources remain clean by testing samples and clearing waterways of refuse around the world. Volunteers also educate whole communities on proper sanitation practices.

Goal 7

86. Volunteers are installing and maintaining solar panels, repairing infrastructure after disasters, contributing to "bottom of the pyramid" renewable energy improvement projects and developing hydroelectric power schemes to make renewable energy accessible.

Goal 11

87. Sustainable cities are active cities filled with volunteers and volunteer-driven non-governmental organizations. Millions are involved in environmental volunteering, farming, building new and inclusive technology, actively educating each other, advocating and lobbying local and national Governments and more. Furthermore, millions of volunteers act as first responders during natural and other disasters, working to safeguard neighbours and help them to recover quickly.

Goal 12

88. Volunteers are consumers, workers and concerned contributors. They are crucial in efforts to lobby companies to improve production practices and are at the forefront in educating consumers about how the goods they purchase are sourced and produced to ensure that scarce resources are not squandered.

Goal 15

89. Volunteers are crucial to ensuring that the natural environment is well cared for. India set a world record in 2017 by planting 66 million trees on one day, made possible through the work of 1.5 million volunteers.

90. In Lebanon, a unique collaboration between the United Nations, local government, the private sector and volunteers resulted in 2,000 volunteers planting 5,000 cedar trees, part of a plan in which volunteers will be instrumental in planting 40 million trees by 2030.

91. The volunteer groups recommend that the high-level political forum:

(a) Formally recognize the contribution of volunteering to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the voluntary national reviews of Member States;

(b) Ensure that volunteer groups are fully recognized and supported in the national plans and strategies for implementing the 2030 Agenda;

(c) Note the commitment of volunteer groups to sharing in accountability for the realization of the Goals;

(d) Follow the lead of Member States by affirming their full support for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 67/290, which supports the participation of non-governmental actors;

(e) Ensure that data for monitoring progress towards the Goals are captured through participatory processes and that they include the perspectives of the most marginalized voices, as well as the volunteers who work closely with them;

(f) Ensure that the accountability, transparency and review framework for the Goals involves community consultation at all levels, including with the most marginalized groups, as well as the volunteers who work closely with them.

XI. Older persons

92. In 2015, 58 per cent of the population aged 60 and over resided in urban areas, up from 50 per cent in 2000. Over half the ageing population, 289 million, lives in low- and middle-income countries, and is increasingly concentrated in urban areas. Older persons are the fastest-growing population group globally, reaching 22 per cent by 2050, and their numbers in cities are expected to increase.

93. Implementing "age-friendly" cities is central to the aim of Goal 11, to make cities and human settlements "inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Older age can increase vulnerability in urban areas.[2] The age-friendly cities approach optimizes

[2] World Health Organization, *Global Report on Urban Health: Equitable, Healthier Cities for Sustainable Development*, 2016.

"opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age."[3]

94. Such an approach aligns with the New Urban Agenda, which calls for age-, gender- and disability-sensitive strategies and for the pledge of Governments to leave no one behind as they implement the 2030 Agenda.

95. This pledge requires States Members of the United Nations to take a rights-based, life-course approach to urban planning in which the active participation of all, including older persons, is solicited.

96. Challenges facing ageing populations in rapidly urbanizing environments include, but are not limited to, inadequate food and shelter, lack of access to water and sanitation, higher risk for infectious and chronic diseases, income insecurity, poverty and social exclusion.

97. Age-related physical and mental health issues, including impaired vision, hearing loss and other functional impairments, present unique challenges for older urban dwellers, which can inhibit their use of public transportation and public spaces, limit opportunities for social and economic contributions and lead to social exclusion and isolation.

98. Significant barriers to the realization of older urban dwellers' rights to health, participation and social inclusion include income insecurity, inadequate access to age-appropriate health and care services and greater gender inequality in older age. The impact of chronic diseases and air pollution on health and mortality in urban areas is greater for the very old and the very young.

99. The lack of adequate age- and gender-disaggregated data is a significant challenge to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 11. The recently created Titchfield group on ageing-related statistics and age-disaggregated data must take account of different experiences of ageing in urban and rural environments.

100. Inclusive design models, such as intergenerational innovations in living arrangements and the use of universal design in building, benefit all generations and respect the rights and enhance the unique contributions of older persons.

101. Appropriate urban development can mitigate the risk factors of ageing in cities and support the contributions of older persons to civic life by enhancing their participation and recognizing their roles as voters, workers, taxpayers, citizens and immigrants. Older persons who are actively involved in their communities play unique roles in maintaining the social cohesion of families and neighbourhoods. They are employees, caregivers, volunteers and bearers of historical memory who transmit wisdom, traditions and culture to future generations. Older women especially provide vital (unpaid) care and support for spouses, children, grandchildren and other, often older, relatives, especially those with disabilities and dementia.

102. Municipal-level governments can play key roles in harnessing the energy of the collective action and potential of older urban populations to lead policy changes that support national Governments' achievement of Goal 11 targets. Progress on Goal 11 is linked to progress on Goals 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 16 and 17.

[3] Ibid., *Global Age-Friendly Cities: A Guide*, 2007.

XII. Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism

103. Three years after the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the gap between the aspirations expressed in the 2030 Agenda and reality are growing — wealth inequality is rising; more people are being dispossessed of land, productive resources, livelihoods and natural resources, pushing them to the threshold of poverty; and more women and defenders of human rights and the environment face oppression, intimidation, threats and marginalization across the globe.

104. In relation to the theme of the high-level political forum, "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies", there is an urgent need to redefine resilience against the backdrop of development justice. In particular:

(a) Resilience must be redefined in view of the increased vulnerability of rural and urban communities due to poverty and the violation of human rights by State and non-State actors and in view of the erosion of livelihoods and habitats and the violation of the right to lands and territories experienced by women, indigenous peoples and local and poor communities that are dependent on natural resources; while the resilience of migrants is celebrated, the reality that it actually forces them to endure exploitative conditions is ignored;

(b) The definition of resilience must take into consideration the existence of unequal power structures at the global and regional levels in aid and trade policies, which increasingly favour powerful countries and multinational corporations at the expense of the peoples;

(c) Resilience requires polycentric governance that ensures the broad participation of stakeholders and rights holders, genuine consultations with and the participation of peoples and the acceptance of the importance of both scientific knowledge and the traditional and local knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities, including women and other marginalized groups, who are also agents of change;

(d) Increasing resilience requires the integration of women's rights and human rights and the provision of space for environmental defenders, many of whom are being targeted for their exemplary commitments to the people and the planet.

105. Unless the systemic barriers leading to conflicts and human rights violations, namely, the grabbing of land and resources, unjust trade and investment agreements, corporate hegemony, patriarchy, fundamentalism, militarism and conflict, and the rise of patriarchal authoritarian governance, are addressed, sustainable and resilient societies will never be achieved.

106. The Goals under review during the high-level political forum are intrinsically linked, and a holistic approach should be taken. Governments should move away from narrow sectoral approaches, progressing towards fully cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation; Governments must properly map and plan policy coherence to ensure institutional coherence.

107. The unrestrained promotion of public-private partnerships and blended finance poses threats to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and should be assessed against the genuine spirit of development. Governments should strengthen their resolve and enforce a strong and binding legal framework to regulate the private sector. Member States must also ensure that the private sector upholds the highest standards of human rights, international labour standards, transparency and accountability. Governments should engage more with small enterprises, as well as community and social enterprises, grass-roots communities, underrepresented constituencies and groups at

risk in all platforms related to the Sustainable Development Goals in national, regional and international advocacy.

108. To strengthen implementation, developed countries are called upon to meet more than their official development assistance commitments, and the call for an assessment of the compatibility of all trade and investment agreements with and their impact on the Sustainable Development Goals is reiterated. It is recommended that a transparent, accountable, adequately resourced intergovernmental tax body with universal membership be created to lead global deliberations on international tax cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations. To strengthen accountability, linkages between the 2030 Agenda and international human rights mechanisms should be strengthened. Reports of civil society organizations, together with United Nations human rights documents, must be officially recognized by the high-level political forum. Governments should adopt people-driven accountability frameworks, including the collection of people-centric data, to ensure effective and inclusive development.

XIII. Together 2030

109. The diverse challenges and interlinked uncertainties of globalization and climate change demand that societies become ever more flexible so as to be able to withstand crises, reinventing themselves in resilient, integrated, sustainable, multidimensional and inclusive ways. The 2030 Agenda recognizes the importance of this approach, and the theme of the high-level political forum presents an opportunity to go beyond the identification of challenges towards a discussion of concrete, collective and funded action that moves societies to be more sustainable, inclusive and resilient.

110. In order to achieve that objective, countries must cooperate in addressing systemic and overlapping inequalities in wealth distribution, gender, income, disability, age and indigeneity or ethnicity. National and local governments should adopt a human rights-based approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with respect to those currently under review.

111. Member States, however, need to reaffirm that, as part of the 2030 Agenda, voluntary national reviews of progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals should respect their universal, integrated and interrelated nature and the three dimensions of sustainable development. Accordingly, in carrying out their voluntary national reviews, Member States should reflect on the implementation of all of the Goals and on their interlinkages. The thematic reviews of a small set of Goals, undertaken during the first segment of the high-level political forum, should not dictate or minimize the scope of the voluntary national reviews.

112. Moreover, voluntary national reviews are not a substitute for national processes. Instead, they should be viewed as opportunities to build national and subnational dialogues and mechanisms on implementation and offer a learning space among all stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement in the voluntary national review process, through the appropriate representative and self-organized civil society coordination mechanisms at the national level, should be encouraged before, during and after the high-level political forum. In addition, national indicator frameworks should be developed to reflect the whole agenda, especially the need to be inclusive of non-economic measures.

113. It is strongly recommended that additional time be allocated at the high-level political forum for interventions of major groups and other stakeholders, especially national civil society platforms and alliances from reporting countries, in order to

allow for more inclusive and participatory engagement, to better listen to the experience of the poorest, most marginalized and disadvantaged persons from voluntary national review countries and to promote more meaningful exchanges with Member States. It is also recommended that the programme of work of the high-level political forum include spaces for stakeholders to provide more detailed feedback on the voluntary national reviews presented by their countries and to share their own contributions to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, for example through the conduct of parallel reviews.

114. For the specific goals under review in 2018, there is a common need for a greater focus on the integration of policy agendas and cross-ministerial cooperation, as well as mechanisms to include in planning processes the voices of the poorest and most marginalized. In addition:

(a) Regarding Goal 6, a greater emphasis needs to be placed on open and transparent financing, recognizing the return on investment in water, sanitation and hygiene (every $1 invested returns $4 in economic benefit);

(b) Goal 7 should be seen as an enabler of other development goals, especially gender equality and women's empowerment;

(c) Regarding Goal 11, there is a need to focus on the equitable use of cities, with a rights-based approach to housing and services in cities and to more fully recognize the social and ecological function of land;

(d) Regarding Goal 12, all countries should commit to the adoption of ISO 20400 on sustainable procurement, including it as a tool for the implementation of best practices in the allocation of foreign aid;

(e) Regarding Goal 15, ecosystem-based policy solutions should be based on the affirmation that the right to a safe, healthy and ecologically balanced environment is a human right in itself.